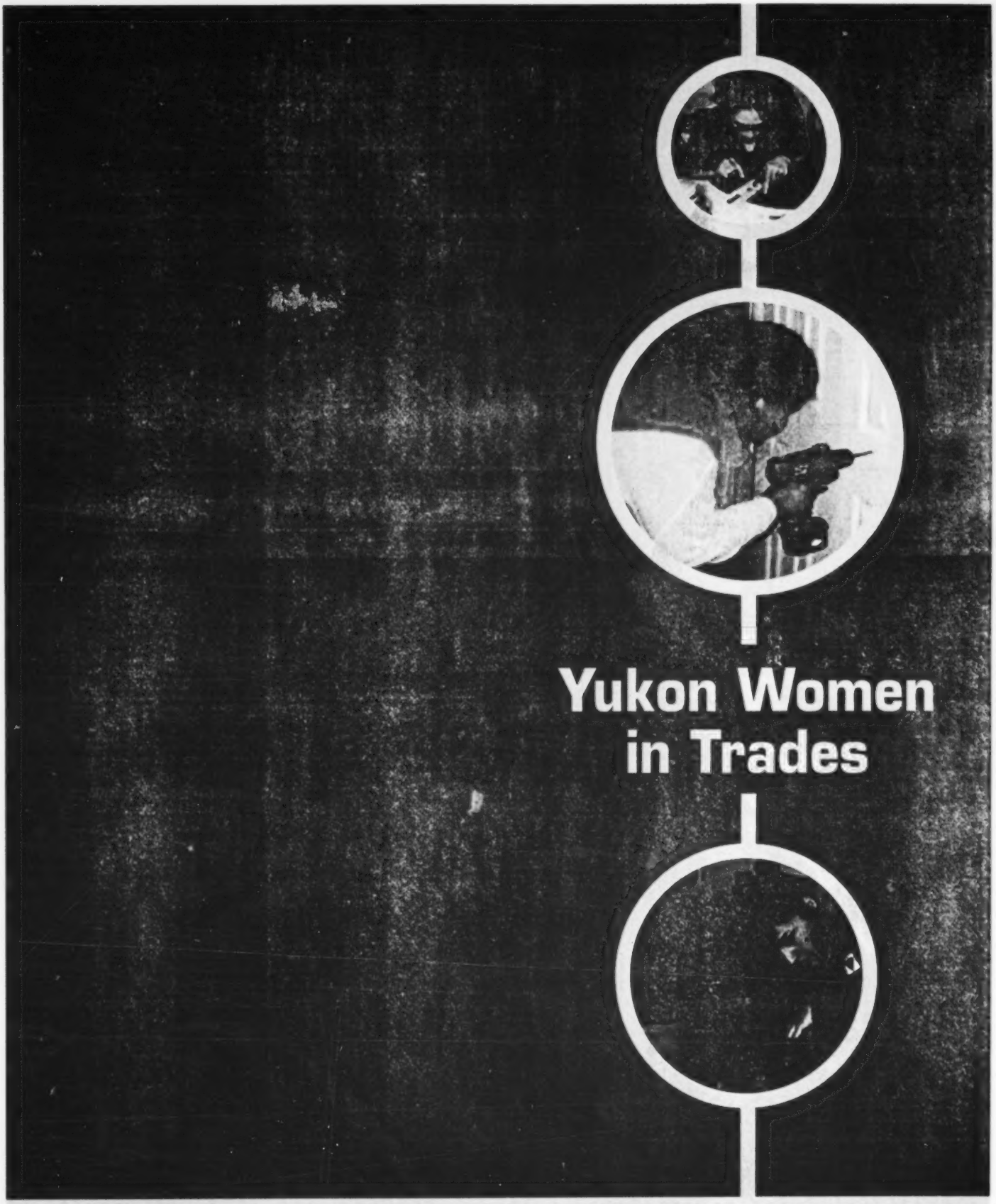

Yukon Women in Trades

FOLLOW-UP REPORT 2005

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Thanks to employers and industry representatives who participated in interviews.

A special thanks to the women who attended an evening focus group to discuss trades work.

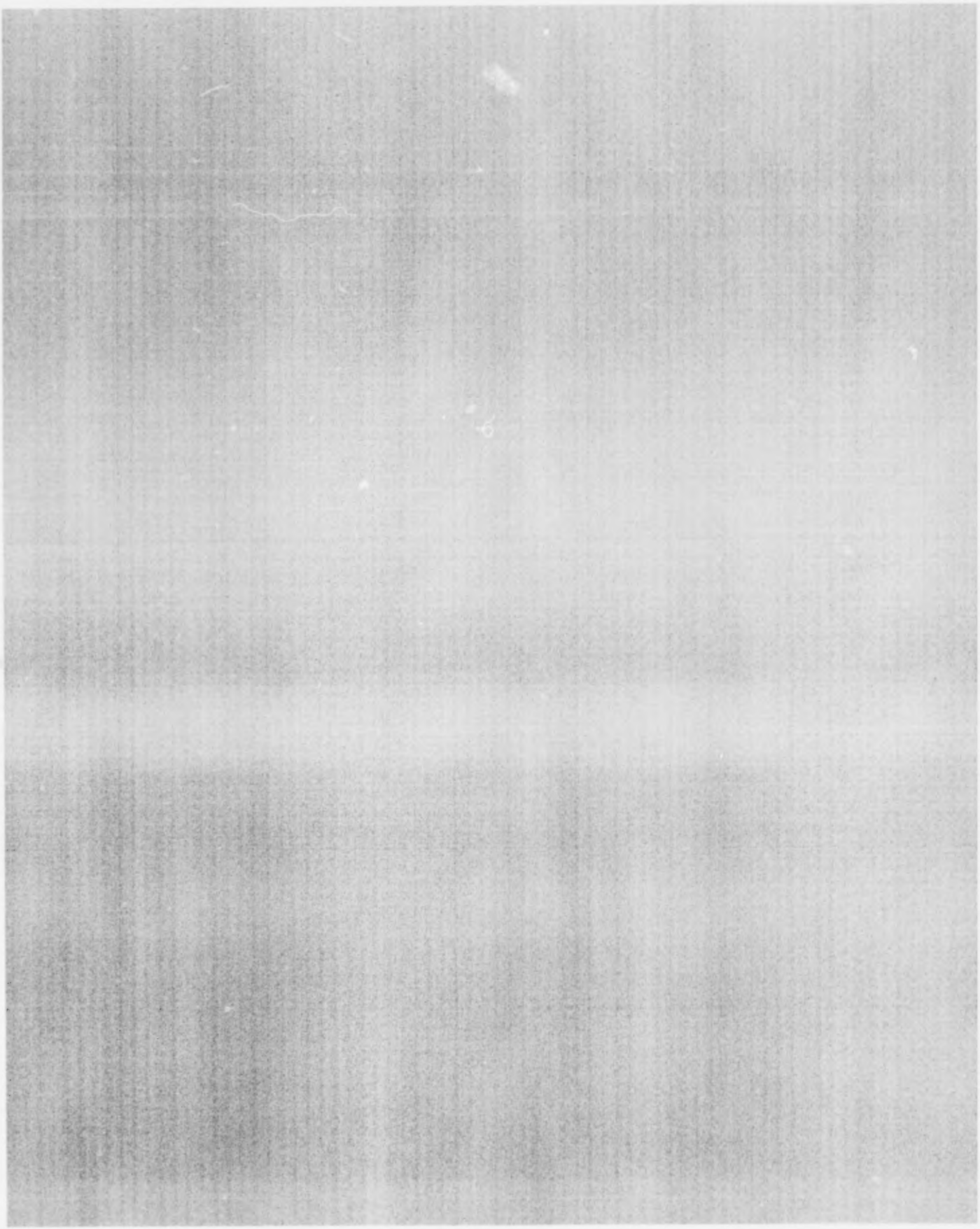


Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Highlights and Summary of Recommendations 2

Statistics on Women in Trades 7

Review of 1999 Recommendations 11

Employer and Industry Survey 15

Focus Group with Women in Trades 22

Recommendations 26

References 29

Introduction

This report is a follow-up to the 1999 report, Yukon Women in Apprenticeship and Trades. The purpose of the original project was threefold: to determine the current situation of women in apprenticeship and trades in the Yukon, to assess the pertinent issues affecting trades women with respect to training and employment, and to create a series of recommendations with the intention of improving the representation of women in apprenticeship and trades in the Yukon.

Five years later, the Women's Directorate, in partnership with the Yukon Department of Education, is undertaking an update to this report*. The purpose of this project is to provide current information about Yukon women in trades, to review the original recommendations and comment on their status, to undertake some new research on the situation of Yukon women in trades, and to provide new recommendations based on this research.

This new research focuses less on the supply side of the equation (recruiting and training women for trades work) and more on the demand side (increasing representation and retaining women in the trades workplace). Consequently, interviews were conducted with Yukon employers in trades and industry to assess the recruitment and retention of women in the trades workplace. Finally, a focus group was held with women who work or have worked in trades. The results of this research highlight some of the steps that have been taken to increase women's participation in trades and informs the recommendations for further initiatives in this area.

**As in the original report, the focus is on trades that are non-traditional for women. Therefore, except where mentioned, baking, cooking and hairdressing are not included in results presented.*

Highlights and Summary of Recommendations

Statistics on Yukon Women in Trades

- The Yukon's female workers make up 48.7% of the labour force.
- Yukon women's representation in trades, transport and equipment operator occupations is 5.5%, according to the 2001 Census.
- According to Statistics Canada's 2001 Aboriginal Population Profile, Aboriginal women in the Yukon make up 9% of all aboriginal people in occupations in trades, transport and equipment operators. Aboriginal women make up about 38% of all Yukon women employed in this area.
- Yukon women's representation in occupations related to primary industry was 13% in 2001. Aboriginal women make up 8% of all Aboriginal people in occupations unique to primary industry, and 18% of all Yukon women in these occupations.
- Technical trades offer high wages in comparison to service industry, child care and clerical work — employment areas where women are concentrated.
- A snapshot of young women's enrolment in shop or technological education classes in upper grades at one Yukon high school in spring 2004 showed that there were 17 young women registered out of 92 total students (18%).
- In the Fall of 2004, women made up 8% (3 out of 39 registrants) of those registered in trades programs at Yukon College.
- Apprenticeships are a gateway to employment in the trades. From 1999 to 2004 Yukon women who received certification in non-traditional trades comprised 4% of the total people receiving certificates, and 32% of the total women receiving certificates.
- Yukon women's representation in trades remains low. Change can be slow; however a number of initiatives have been put into place to increase women's representation.

Summary of recent initiatives to increase women's participation in trades:

- Formation of a Yukon Women in Technology and Trades (YWITT) organization to support tradeswomen and encourage women's participation in trades
- YWITT's activities, including:
  - Hands-on workshops with young women in community schools
  - Women-only courses (Women Exploring Trades) and workshops (home renovation and repair, welding, silversmithing and car care, among others)
- Skills Canada Yukon – Skills Clubs and Skills Workshops, several of which target women or young women (for example, Mother/Daughter carpentry night)
- Young Women Exploring Trades conference — an annual event for the past 4 years

- Yukon Government (YG) Apprenticeship Branch's new 'Step into the Trades' Campaign
- YG Department of Education 'Women in Apprenticeship and Trades' web page
- Gender-specific traffic safety clothing available to female workers at YG Department of Highways and Public Works

Employer and Industry Survey

- As part of this report, a survey questionnaire was conducted with 32 employers and industry representatives in the trades.
- When asked if they feel women are present in adequate numbers in trades occupations in the Yukon, 77% of respondents said no.
- The majority of respondents (67%) were not aware of any promotional activities related to increasing the participation of women in the trades. Those that were aware (33%) mentioned the work of Skills Canada, Yukon WITT, college programs, and the Young Women Exploring Trades conference.
- When asked if women considering careers in the trades face barriers that men do not, 73% of respondents said yes. Attitude of the male workplace was the most commonly mentioned barrier. Lack of physical strength, women's perception of trades, and family responsibilities were also mentioned by respondents.
- Seventy percent of those interviewed felt that women could bring unique skills and abilities to their industry.
- The employers were asked if the men in their shops are uncomfortable with the presence of women workers. The majority (60%) said no. Thirty percent said men were sometimes uncomfortable.
- Respondents were asked if women employees have the opportunity to see women role models in senior roles. Thirty percent said yes, and 70% said no, or that there are women in senior positions, but not in the trades area.
- Regarding changes or supports in the trades or industry workplace, most respondents felt that supports or promotion should apply equally to men and women, and that trades promotion needs to be increased to youth from a young age.

Focus Group With Women in Trades

- An evening focus group was held with women who worked in a variety of trades.
- The women felt that stereotypes about women and women's roles do affect women's ability to enter the trades, but generally they felt that attitudes were getting better. They felt that while some men may feel uncomfortable at first, respect could be earned by doing a good job.
- The women were asked if they'd worked with other women or had female role models in their trade. Almost all said that they had not worked with or had female role models.
- The focus group participants were asked if lack of physical strength was a problem for them in their work. None of them felt that this was a problem, an interesting contrast to the employers, 35% of whom mentioned physical strength as a barrier to women's employment in trades.
- Fifty percent of the employers surveyed said that work/family balance is more of an issue for female trades workers. In contrast, none of the women who participated in the focus group felt that it was a major issue. They felt that children have an impact on both men's and women's lives.
- The women who participated in the focus group felt that schools and teachers do not encourage the trades, and that parents may not be aware of the advantages of trades careers. Peer pressure also makes it difficult for young women to pursue something 'different.' The women mentioned the value of WITT workshops in schools to get the girls to handle tools and make them aware that they can do these things.
- Job shadowing, mentoring, and the opportunity to try the trades for short periods, either through a course or Skills Club for girls, were suggested by the focus group participants.
- Participants highlighted the value of having female instructors in trades courses as role models, for both young women and young men.
- Several women also thought that giving incentives to employers would help. Focus group participants were very positive about the value of having a local Women in Trades and Technology organization (Yukon WITT).

Summary of Recommendations

Education/Promotion

- Continue to support the work of the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology (YWITT) organization in schools and communities to promote the recruitment, training and retention of women in trades.
- Continue to support the Young Women Exploring Trades conferences.
- Assess and create a strategy to increase the participation of young women in senior high-school trades classes.
- Increase female role models in trades in Yukon schools at both the elementary and high school level. Effort should continue to be made to recruit a female industrial arts instructor, or create other paid opportunities for tradeswomen to participate in the classroom setting.
- Promotional campaigns to increase interest in trades careers should be specifically designed to reach women and girls.
- In an effort to reach women at later stages of career choice, or those in more traditional and low-paid sectors of the workforce, conduct a survey to assess these women's interest in pursuing apprenticeship and/or trades careers and determine how best to undertake 'bridging programs' to move them into these fields.
- Continue to support Skills Canada Yukon, and other partners from outside government, in their work to promote trades to women.
- Provide showcase opportunities for tradeswomen, such as a 'women's trade show' or demonstration project.
- Continue to evaluate the representation of Yukon women in apprenticeship and trades on an ongoing basis, in order to evaluate the success of promotional measures in the long term.

Training

- Establish and implement a pre-employment trades program for women.
- Women-only introductory trades courses with an employment focus should be offered in Yukon communities.
- Conduct an assessment of the Yukon Government Apprenticeship Program and the Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Program as they pertain to the involvement of women and young women and make recommendations to increase women's participation.
- Consider developing a formalized mentoring program, with a roster of women in various trades.

Workplace

- Encourage new projects and developments in the Yukon's construction and resource industries to develop human resource plans indicating steps to increase participation of women and other equity groups.

- Assess the barriers and opportunities for aboriginal women in trades and consider specific training and employment opportunities to meet their needs.

- The Apprenticeship Unit of the Department of Education should consider keeping lists of employers willing to take on a female apprentice, in order to facilitate the placement of women apprentices with employers.

- Create and provide training to employers and workers in industry about how to best recruit, integrate and retain women workers.

- Work within the Yukon Government to increase the representation of women in trades jobs in Yukon Government departments.

- Consider setting up an industry committee(s) to discuss strategies around recruitment and retention of women in trades. Assess the participation of women in existing advisory boards such as the Yukon Apprenticeship Advisory Committee and the Trades Advisory Committees and consider working with these boards on increasing recruitment and retention of women in the trades workplace.

Statistics on Women in Trades

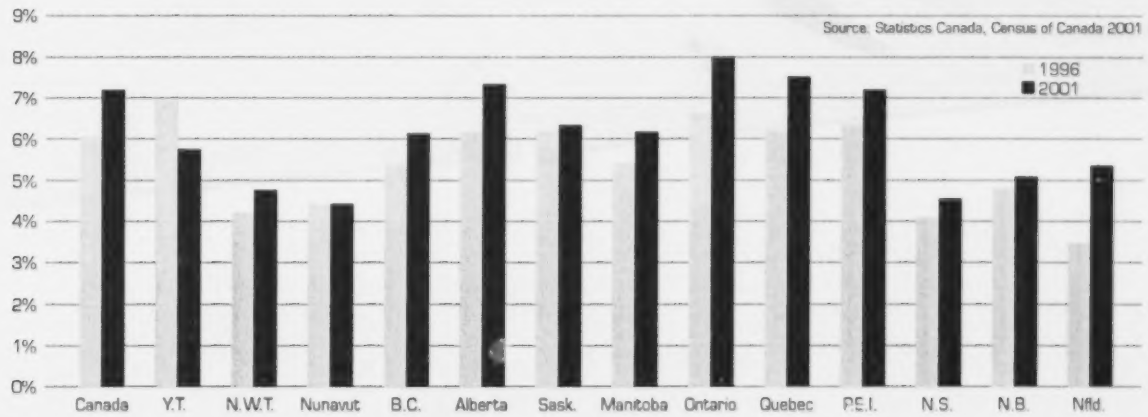
Women and Trades Employment

At the time of the most recent Canadian Census (2001) there were 8,735 female workers in the Yukon, making up 48.7% of the Yukon's labour force. While women are participating in the work force at rates nearly equal to men, they continue to occupy very different sectors of the working world.

Women are over-represented (relative to their proportion of the population) in sales and service, social work, health and administrative jobs. They are under-represented in sciences, management, and, in particular, trades. This occupational concentration in certain employment areas affects women's income, benefits, job security and job satisfaction. Technical trades offer high wages in comparison to service industry, childcare and clerical work. Occupational concentration is a contributing factor to the ongoing wage gap between men and women.

The following figure shows women as a percentage of trades workers in the Yukon and across Canada.

Women's Representation in Trades: Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators



According to these Census figures, Yukon women's representation in trades, transport and equipment operator occupations has dropped from 7% in 1996 to 5.5% in 2001. Interestingly, women's representation increased in most other jurisdictions over the same period.

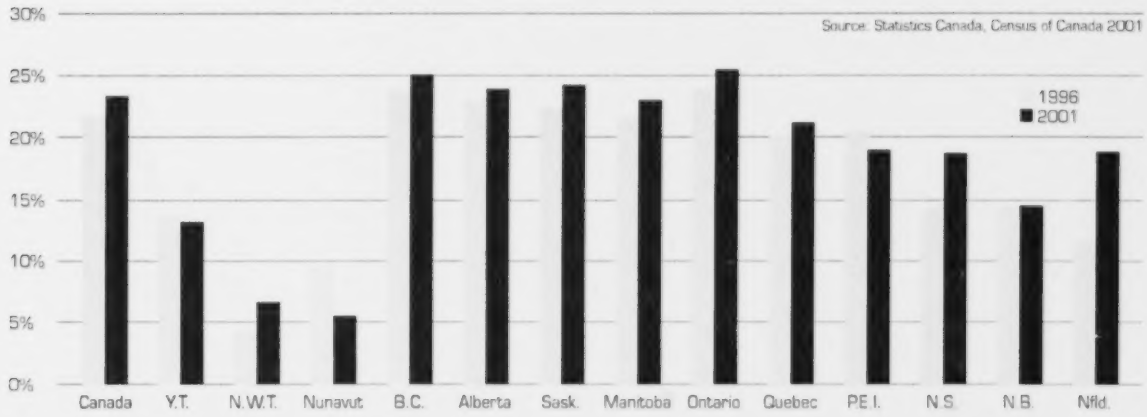
Labour force statistics for 2003 show women's representation in these occupations to be 6%. (Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2003)

According to Statistics Canada's 2001 Aboriginal Population Profile, aboriginal women in the Yukon make up 9% of all Aboriginal people in occupations in trades, transport and equipment operators. Aboriginal women make up about 38% of all Yukon women employed in this area, even though Aboriginal people comprise approximately 20% of the Yukon population.

The following figure shows women as a percentage of those in occupations related to primary industry across Canada.

Aboriginal women make up 8% of all aboriginals in occupations unique to primary industry, and 18% of all Yukon women in these occupations. (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Population Profile, 2001)

Women's Representation in Trades — Occupations Unique to Primary Industry

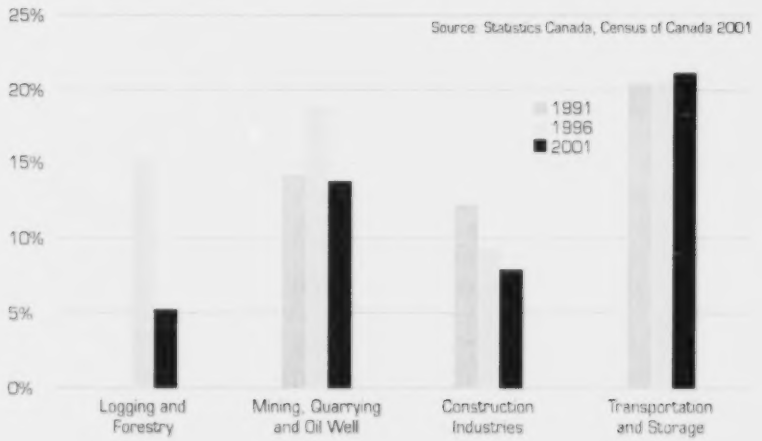


The figure to the right shows Yukon women's representation in trades-related industries over the past three census years.

The years covered by this update saw a downturn in the Yukon's resource sector economy. Mining and oil and gas dropped from 12.4% of the Yukon economy in 1997 to less than 3% in 2003 (Statistics Canada Catalogue 15-001-XIE). Closure of mines led to a loss of jobs and a drop in population. Currently, the population has resumed growth, and there is renewed interest in mining and oil and gas, and strength in the construction sector.

"The guys I encounter that are my age, they're like, that's awesome, seeing a girl in the trades, it's about time. They think it's amazing. I've never really gotten any negative response from the guys my age — it's mostly just older guys or somebody that might be threatened."

Yukon Women's Representation by Industry



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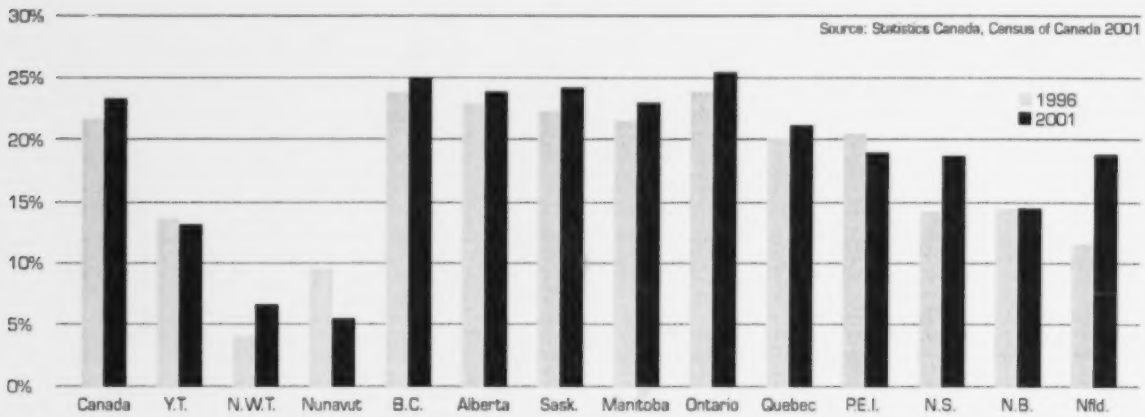

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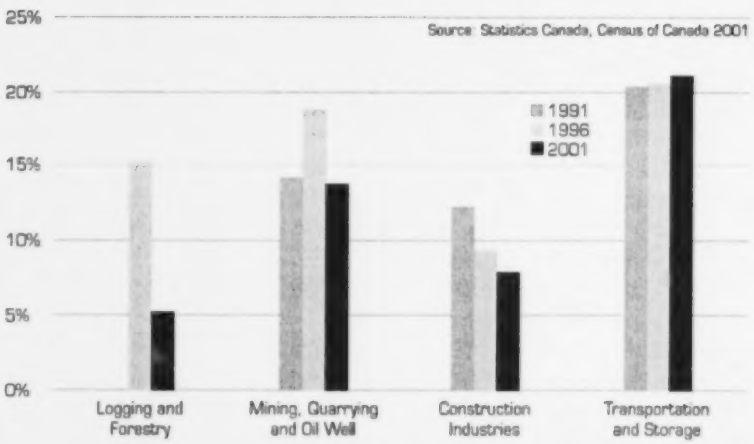


Although the data show that the total numbers of both men and women working in trades and resource industries declined from 1996 to 2001, it is important to note that the percentage of women compared to the total number of workers also dropped during that time.

"You realize pretty quick when you've had a couple of minimum wage jobs...how little satisfaction, how little you can really do..."

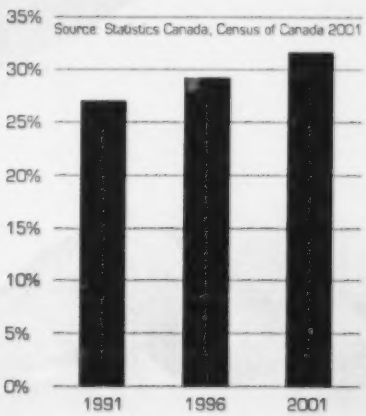
Women and Trades Education

The following figures detail Yukon women's participation in education and training related to the skilled trades.

A complete picture of young women's enrolment in shop or technological education classes in high school over time has not been gathered to date. However, enrolment data from F.H. Collins High School for spring 2004 provides a snapshot of the situation.

In that semester, Technology Education classes were offered in both Grade 11 and 12 in automotive technology, metal fabrication and machining, and carpentry and joinery. There were 17 young women registered in these classes out of 92 total students (18%).

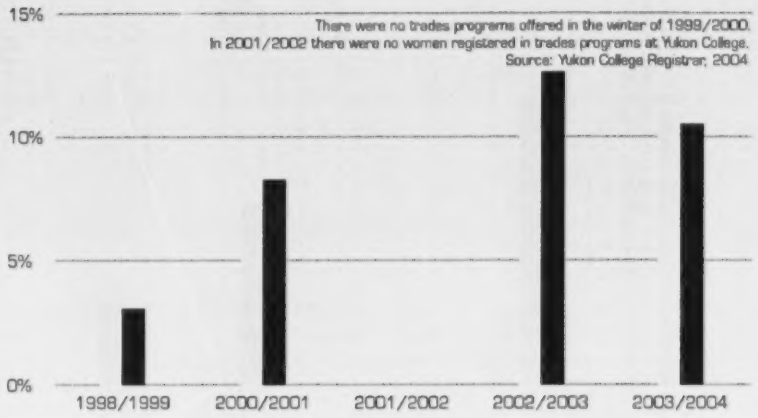
Yukon Women's Representation Among Those with Trades Certificates



The following figure shows Yukon women's representation among those in the territory who hold trades certificates or diplomas (this includes trades such as cooking, baking and hairdressing).

The representation of women in pre-employment trades courses at Yukon College is shown in the figure below.

In the Fall of 2004, women made up 8% (3 out of 39 registrants) of those registered in trades programs at Yukon College.



Apprenticeships are a gateway to employment in the trades. Yukon women apprentice in a number of trades; however, their representation in the non-traditional trades (i.e. trades other than baking, cooking and hairdressing) is low.

The numbers above include those who apprenticed in cooking, baking and hairstyling. When these are removed, women who received certification in non-traditional trades were 4% of the total receiving certificates, and 32% of the total women.

In July 2004, there were 257 registered apprentices, 16 (6.2%) of which were female. However, only 5 of the women were registered in non-traditional trades, making women's representation only 2%. The percentage is similar (even slightly decreased) from 1999, when women made up 3% of those registered in non-traditional trades apprenticeships.

It is interesting to note that while the numbers of women registered as apprentices are low, their certification rate is comparatively higher; women who enter the system can and do succeed.

The statistics presented here show that Yukon women's representation in trades remains low. In some cases, particularly in the employment sphere, women's representation has even decreased since 1999. However, as shown, women's representation among those with trades certificates has increased slightly over the Census years. Change can be slow; however, as the following section shows, a number of initiatives have been put into place to increase women's representation.

Yukon Apprenticees

Year	# Registered	# Women	%	# Certified	# Women	%
1999	230	13	5.7%	24	5	21%
2000	267	14	5.2%	31	2	6.5%
2001	276	15	5.4%	23	3	13%
2002	266	16	6%	22	4	18%
2003	283	16	5.7%	22	3	14%
2004 to July	257	16	6.2%	22	2	9%

Source: Yukon Advanced Education, Apprenticeship Branch, 2004

Review of 1999 Recommendations

The following recommendations originated as part of the 1999 report, Yukon Women in Apprenticeship and Trades. In the five years following the report, significant progress has been made in several areas towards increasing promotion and opportunities for women in trades. This section provides a review of the initiatives taken under each of the original recommendations.

Improve and Increase Education

Education to promote trades to women from a young age is an ongoing need. However, there have been several initiatives in this area. Skills Canada Yukon's work to promote trades to young people has increased educational opportunities. Skills Canada offers Skills Clubs and Skills Workshops, several of which are targeted at women or young women.

Young Women Exploring Trades (YWET) conferences have been held annually since 2001. Partners in planning the conference are Yukon Women in Trades and Technology (WITT), Advanced Education, Public Schools, the Women's Directorate, Skills Canada Yukon, Yukon College and Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. These daylong conferences give 120 Grade 8 girls an opportunity to try hands-on projects in a variety of trades. A recent survey of conference participants found the overwhelming majority enjoyed the experience, learned new skills and were more likely to consider a career in trades after attending the conference.

> *"How do you make girls stubborn enough to want to do it? To say, great, I'll show 'em, I'm gonna do it, I'm gonna work my way up there... a lot of people don't want to do that."*

Yukon Women In Trades and Technology (WITT), with the support of the Yukon Government (YG) Department of Education has also begun community visits, where tradeswomen travel to community schools and present hands-on workshops with girls in Grades 5 -8.

The Apprenticeship Branch is also increasing its efforts to promote skilled trades careers to counsellors, parents and students. A new 'Step into the Trades' campaign has begun in partnership with the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and Skills Canada.

The Department of Education has added a 'Women in Apprenticeship and Trades' page to its web site, with links to more information, programs and organizations.

Teach Women the 'Survival Skills' They Need to Work in a Non-traditional Environment

Women entering a non-traditional, and often male-dominated, environment need not only information about the job they will be doing, but also information about the work culture to help them fit in. Negative stereotypes about women continue to affect the acceptance of women in the workplace. This recommendation has not been specifically addressed. Yukon WITT does offer a variety of women-only courses, including home renovation and repair, welding, silversmithing and car care. These courses are generally short workshops, and do not explicitly include training in assertiveness, conflict resolution, workplace harassment or working in non-traditional environments. Any potential full-length pre-employment courses for women in trades should include curricula in this area.

Increase Family Support

This is not an easy area in which to measure change or success. However, several initiatives have occurred. Skills Canada has offered Mother/Daughter carpentry courses, as well as Parent/Child courses, that were primarily filled with mothers and sons. The Apprenticeship Branch is embarking on a larger campaign to increase awareness of trades among school counsellors, students and parents.

> *"(Even) if you educate the kids, you've still got the teachers, the parents... We're on the job and we're working residential and we're visible, you know, we're right there, the parents are there, the little kids are there and oftentimes they'll say 'See – what's a small woman doing there?' A teenage kid shows up and they'll look at you like you got two heads, but then they'll say, oh, cool."*

Combat Negative Socialization

This is another area where progress is difficult to assess. Gender Equity Committees in the schools are only intermittently active. Role models in schools and communities are needed so that young women can see women and men in a variety of career roles. The women who participated in the focus group felt that a lack of self-assertiveness on the part of young women (particularly at the high-school age) was a hindrance to breaking into trades, because peer, school and parental pressures move them into certain career streams and ways of thinking about their abilities.

Increase Promotion

Work is ongoing on this recommendation. Skills Canada Yukon has done significant work since its inception in 1998 to increase promotion and opportunities in trades for young people. Skills competitions are a big focus for them, but they also put effort into skills clubs and other programming to reach youth. The Apprenticeship Branch is embarking on a large 'Step into the Trades' campaign (in partnership with the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum) to increase awareness of trades among school counsellors, students and parents. However, active rather than passive promotion of trades to women specifically, is needed to increase participation in a meaningful way.

Provide Programs for Women

Progress has been made on this recommendation. Yukon WITT offers a variety of introductory trades courses for women only. These courses have been extremely popular and usually have a waiting list due to excess registration. The Young Women Exploring Trades conference features fun participatory workshops in trades for Grade 8 girls. Skills Canada Yukon offers a women's carpentry night that is very popular. These initiatives offer several benefits: women learn new skills for use in home or work, skills they can model for family and children to show women in a variety of roles.

Improve and Add to Existing Training Programs

Offer women-only training — Progress has been made in the area of women-only trades training. WITT courses, including a six-week introduction to trades for women and a variety of weekend sessions in carpentry, home repair, welding, car care, among others, have been offered to Yukon women. About 200 women have participated in WITT's courses and workshops over the past several years. Most courses fill quickly, requiring waiting lists. Evaluations from the courses have been overwhelmingly positive. The next step is a pre-trades qualifier course for women who are interested in more in-depth studies or preparing for apprenticeship.

The YWET conferences are also for young women only, offering Grade 8 girls an opportunity to try a variety of new skills in a fun and comfortable environment.

"The one thing in my life is I've never demanded respect on anything – I've always earned it."

Offer training that meets the needs of women — The clear success of the above courses demonstrates a strong interest in learning more about trades on the part of Yukon women and the value of introducing these skills in a non-threatening environment.

Make classrooms gender-sensitive — There is currently no explicit training for high-school shop teachers, college trades instructors or employers who take on apprentices in making the learning environment comfortable for both male and female students.

Improve and Add to Existing Government Programs

The Yukon Government Apprenticeship Program is not utilized by many women. The Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Program (YSSAP), while excellent, is also under-utilized. Only 14 of 128 young women (11%) who were surveyed as part of a YWET conference assessment had heard of YSSAP. There are currently no government programs specifically designed to work with industry and employers to increase the numbers of women in trades.

Make Changes to the Trades Workplace

There has been little progress on this recommendation. The results of the employer survey (see following section) offer some directions for forwarding work in this area.

Consider 'Bridging Programs' — This refers to programs that offer internal job opportunities to move women from administrative work to trades work within the same workplace. There has been no progress identified on this recommendation.

Increase Family Support

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Improve and Add to Existing Training Programs

Offer women-only training — Progress has been made in the area of women-only trades training. WITT courses, including a six-week introduction to trades for women and a variety of weekend sessions in carpentry, home repair, welding, car care, among others, have been offered to Yukon women. About 200 women have participated in WITT's courses and workshops over the past several years. Most courses fill quickly, requiring waiting lists. Evaluations from the courses have been overwhelmingly positive. The next step is a pre-trades qualifier course for women who are interested in more in-depth studies or preparing for apprenticeship.

The YWET conferences are also for young women only, offering Grade 8 girls an opportunity to try a variety of new skills in a fun and comfortable environment.

"The one thing in my life is I've never demanded respect on anything – I've always earned it."

Offer training that meets the needs of women — The clear success of the above courses demonstrates a strong interest in learning more about trades on the part of Yukon women and the value of introducing these skills in a non-threatening environment.

Make classrooms gender-sensitive — There is currently no explicit training for high-school shop teachers, college trades instructors or employers who take on apprentices in making the learning environment comfortable for both male and female students.

Improve and Add to Existing Government Programs

The Yukon Government Apprenticeship Program is not utilized by many women. The Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Program (YSSAP), while excellent, is also under-utilized. Only 14 of 128 young women (11%) who were surveyed as part of a YWET conference assessment had heard of YSSAP. There are currently no government programs specifically designed to work with industry and employers to increase the numbers of women in trades.

Make Changes to the Trades Workplace

There has been little progress on this recommendation. The results of the employer survey (see following section) offer some directions for forwarding work in this area.

Consider 'Bridging Programs' — This refers to programs that offer internal job opportunities to move women from administrative work to trades work within the same workplace. There has been no progress identified on this recommendation.

Increase Workplace Supports for Women — Flexible work arrangements, on-site childcare and other supports vary among businesses and employers. (See results of employer survey in the next section).

Ensure that Workplaces are Safe and Comfortable for Women — Workplace 'codes of conduct' and the existence of explicitly stated harassment policies vary from workplace to workplace, as does the availability of tools and equipment designed for women. Among successes in this area is a new effort to provide gender specific traffic safety clothing to female workers in the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Provide Women with Mentors

The existence of an active WITT group in the Yukon, and Yukon WITT's work in schools is helpful in this area. However, there is no formal system in place in workplaces, schools, the apprentice system, or government to provide mentors for women embarking on trades careers.

Create Women's Networks

This recommendation was achieved through the creation of a Yukon group for women in trades. The Yukon chapter of Women in Trades and Technology (YWITT) was formed in July 2000 and incorporated as a non-profit society on August 25, 2000. The Government of Yukon Women's Directorate and Department of Education worked to assist in the establishment of a Yukon WITT, and continue to support WITT's activities. Yukon WITT's activities centre around bringing trades information and experience to women of all ages. Their goal is to support tradeswomen and increase the participation of women in well-paying, in-demand trades and technology jobs.

Unfortunately, the national WITT (WITT NN) is now defunct, limiting the national voice of women in trades. WITT NN was offering an Employment Retention project to assist employers in improving the retention of their female workers. However, active WITT groups still exist in other provinces and territories.

Increase Financial Support for Women in Trades

There is no specific funding for women to support trades training (for example, for women on social assistance), nor incentives for employers to hire female workers at this time.

Employer and Industry Survey

This trades questionnaire took place June 2004, and was administered through personal interviews with thirty-two people. The majority of those interviewed are owners or managers at Yukon businesses and companies. Some are small business owners directly involved with trades, others work in human resources, at unions, First Nations or business associations or as supervisors at work sites.

Several common threads emerged from discussions with employers. A prominent one is the contradictory message that the local economy is down and businesses are suffering, yet at the same time there is a shortage of skilled trades workers. Employers also felt that our society does not foster respect for trades culture, thereby creating negative stereotypes of 'blue-collar' workers. Trades workers are commonly perceived as big, brawny, uncouth and uneducated (and if they are women, as being gay). Many of those interviewed felt that schools were doing little to change this image, and that there should be more education about the trades in the school system.

While those interviewed felt there was a shortage of skilled trades workers, and that opportunities for employment in mining and exploration fields were increasing, they admitted there were still barriers to women applying for trades jobs. They felt women's difficulties might include a perceived lack of physical strength, lack of experience with tools and equipment, and the resistance of male workers to the presence of women on work crews and in camps.

Regarding women and trades, those interviewed felt that women may face barriers entering the world of trades because they are more likely to lack the three 'E's – education, experience and exposure.

They felt that women needed to be prepared for the realities of the trades workplace. The work is hard and physical, the hours can be long, and the language rough. It is clear that the trades workplace remains male-dominated and will be until a 'critical mass' of women is reached. As one employer stated: "That's the reality and women who want to enter that workplace will just have to live with it."

Results — Numbers of Women in Yukon Trades Workplaces

The following figure shows the numbers of employees of the thirty businesses and organizations that participated in interviews for this survey. Several were only able to give rough estimates.

Thirty-seven percent of those surveyed said the numbers of women in their workplace are increasing. Seventeen percent said the numbers are decreasing and 47% said the numbers are stable.

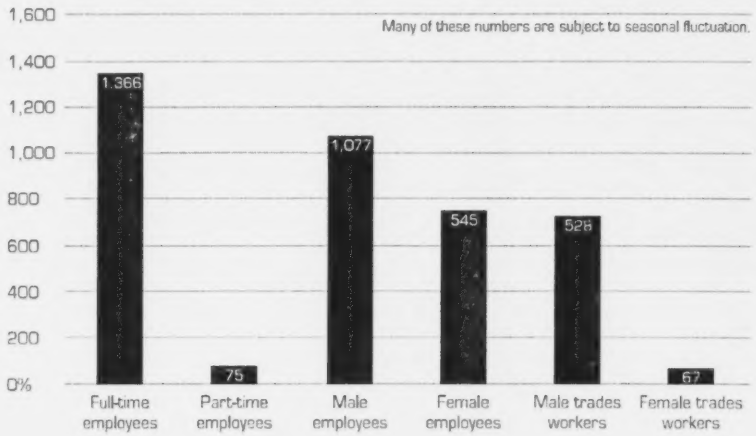
When asked if they feel women are present in adequate numbers in trades occupations in the Yukon, 77% of respondents said no.

The ages of trades employees working at the time of the survey ranged from 18 to 65.

Respondents were asked if they believe there is an availability of skilled women in their area. Eighty percent said no. Six percent said yes. Several stated that both men and women are scarce.

Of those interviewed, 83% had had a woman apply on a trades job.

Yukon Trades/Industry Employees

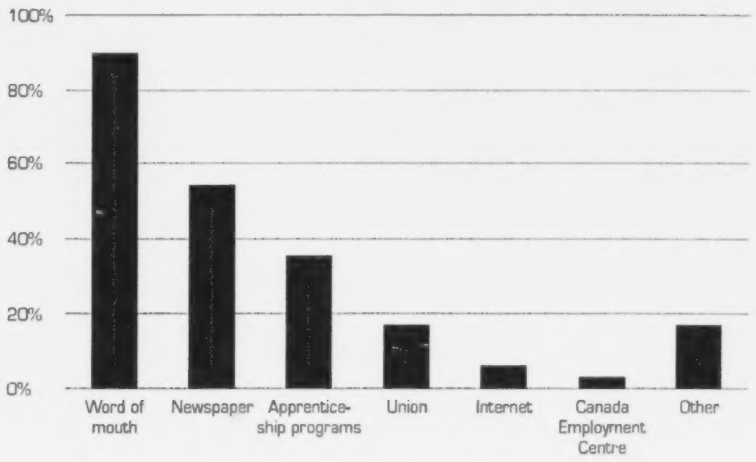


Results — Recruitment and Hiring

Respondents were asked how they recruit trades employees. The results are shown below.

Fifty-seven percent of respondents felt that existing recruitment strategies are effective in attracting the very best qualified workers. Twenty-three percent said existing strategies are not effective.

How Trades Employees are Recruited



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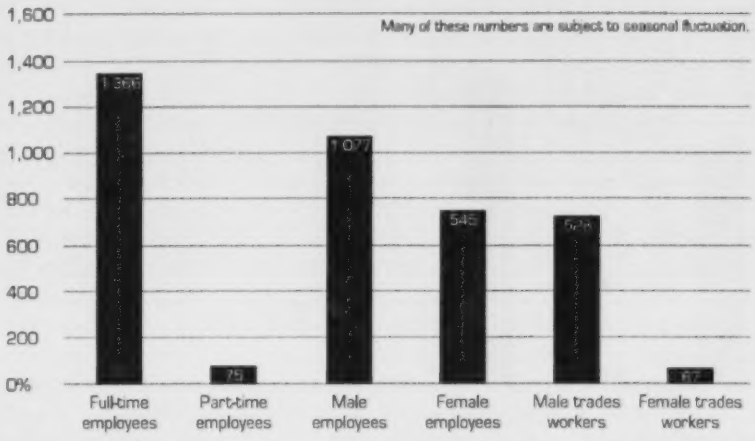

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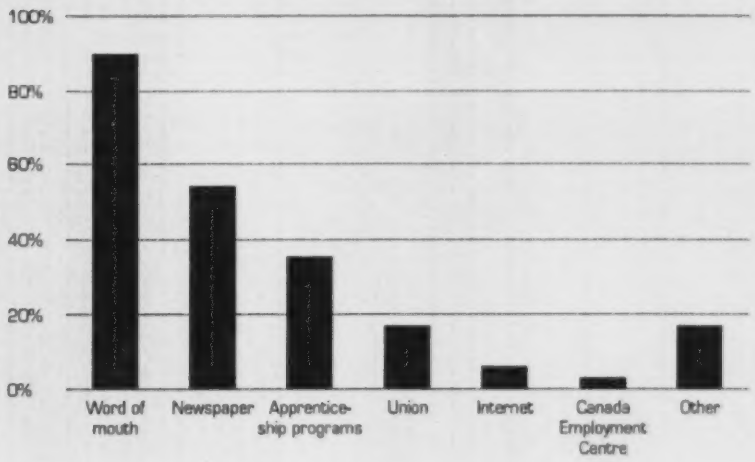
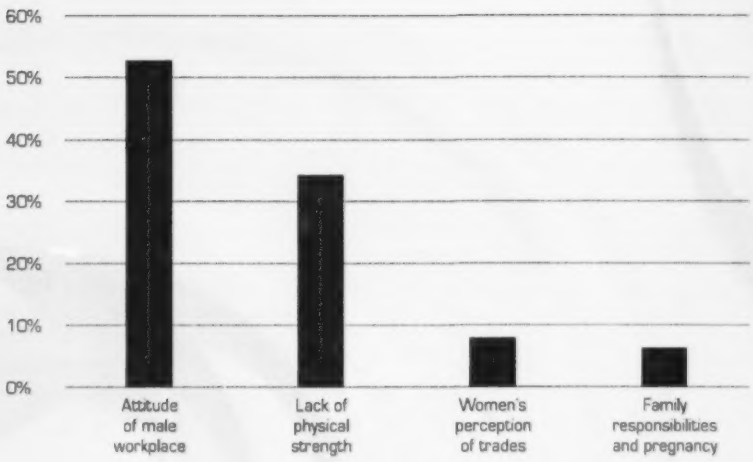


Respondents were asked if they felt that the way most trades employees are recruited and hired is a barrier to women. Seventy-seven percent said no; 13% said yes. Of those who said yes, some of the reasons given were that "word of mouth is an old boys' club" and that most people looking for work "just go to the job site — this is harder for women." One employer mentioned that women don't present themselves as aggressively as men and that women are "too easily intimidated by men when they apply for a job." Another said "lots of guys won't hire women — mostly they think they aren't strong enough to do the physical work required in the trades."

The majority of respondents (67%) were not aware of any promotional activities related to increasing the participation of women in the trades. Those that were aware (33%) mentioned the work of Skills Canada, Yukon WITT, college programs, and the Young Women Exploring Trades conference.

When asked if women considering careers in the trades face barriers that men do not, 73% of respondents said yes. The following figure shows the barriers most commonly mentioned by respondents.

Barriers to Entering Trades



Attitudes in a male-dominated workplace were the most commonly mentioned barrier. One employer said that the attitude of workers on the job was a "major problem" and that there is "immense pressure on women to fail. (They) have to be prepared for (a certain) amount of anger and resistance from workers." As one man commented: "women still get some resistance and attitude." Another said: "any woman will be under a magnifying glass at first."

Some of the respondents felt that women were not physically strong or mentally prepared for trades work. "Women need to know the realities of the workplace," one said. Others were more critical: "Women seem to expect you to lead them by the hand and make allowances for them being women in a man's job." Another person expressed that "a lot of the time, women are not serious enough about the job and only want to do the fun stuff."

Family responsibilities and pregnancy were also mentioned as barriers: "Women have trouble dedicating themselves to a career; marriage and children get in the way."

Respondents were asked if programs designed to bring more women into trades would be helpful to their business or organization. Eighty-three percent said yes. Most felt that general programs for both women and men would be useful. Others mentioned information sessions with employers, a Yukon Government apprenticeship program with a focus on women, wage subsidies for employers who hire women and reaching girls earlier (high school being too late).

Seventy percent of those interviewed felt that women could bring unique skills and abilities to their industry. These qualities included the following: more respect for equipment, better team players, clean language, stronger communication skills, different attitudes, attention to detail and multitasking.

"I really like dealing with women because you can work with them on different levels. I would like to see more women getting these skills and the high-paid jobs."

"I think women are better coordinated and have better attention to details."

"Women are great multitaskers; men aren't."

Another employer said women "have to prove themselves so (they) work harder."

But one employer stated "women underestimate their skills and abilities."

Employers were asked if they had ever or would ever be willing to take on a female apprentice. Ninety-three percent said yes.

Results — Worplace Environment

Respondents were asked if they find the work environment is affected by the presence of women. Fifty-three percent said yes; 27% said no; and another 20% were unsure.

"Men feel they have to watch their language."

"It takes time to build into a work team."

The employers were asked if the men in their shops are uncomfortable with the presence of women workers. The majority (60%) said no. Thirty percent said men were sometimes uncomfortable. Several said it was mostly older men who were uncomfortable. Another reason given was that men would have to 'watch their language' around a female co-worker.

"There's no doubt that older men are uncomfortable; there's the feeling that women don't belong."

"Women shouldn't be political on a job site; that only makes men uncomfortable and resent them."

Sixty percent of respondents felt that women employees are comfortable in the trades work environment. Seventeen percent said no, and another 17% said women are mostly comfortable. Some mentioned the pressures women face working in a predominantly male environment:

"Women have to work so hard to prove themselves."

"One woman can feel isolated; there's safety in numbers."

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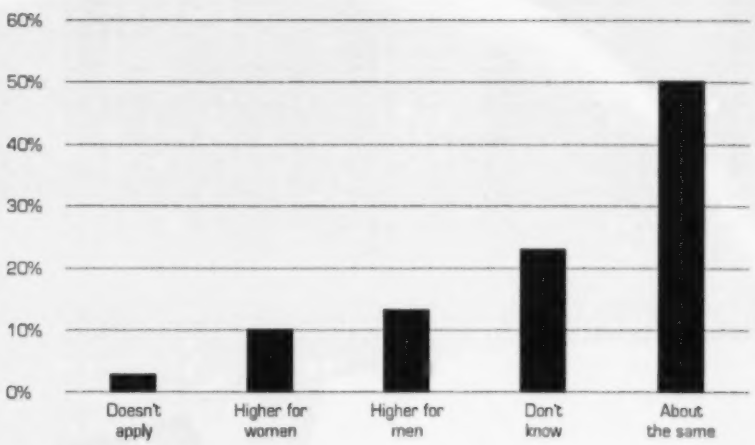
Eighty percent of respondents said that the working conditions at their workplace are appropriate for both men and women.

When asked if women have the same needs and concerns as men in the trades workplace, 70% said yes. Twenty-three percent said no. When asked how women's needs are different, a respondent mentioned "employers have to worry about women's family responsibilities and women getting pregnant." One stated that "women are more concerned about safety", another that "with male workers, there are always power conflicts – women are not interested in dominance." Most felt that men and women have the same concerns: "both have to deal with camp life and remote locations," "both are concerned with wages, working conditions, etc."

"Women are more concerned with the job of being a wife and mother; women consider being a wife and mother a job, men don't think of being a husband and father a job."

The table below shows results of a question about turnover rates. Half of those interviewed said that turnover rates for men and women in their workplace were about the same.

Turnover Rates



Those who felt that turnover for women was higher were asked why. "Working conditions are too tough – they'll wimp out," one said. Another mentioned family obligations. One employer suggested that turnover rates may be higher for women because of feelings of isolation: "having more than one woman might help retention."

Employers were asked if there is a formal, written harassment policy in their workplace. Forty-three percent said yes. This was directly related to the size of the company; larger businesses were more likely to have formal harassment policies.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents said they had dealt with a complaint of harassment in their workplace. The responses as to how the complaints were dealt with varied, from "handled internally", "informal discussion" to "ended up before labour board", "mediator was hired" to "male was fired."

Respondents were asked about the predictability of work demands and hours of work in their workplace. Most (73%) said that they were predictable. Many commented, however, that the work is seasonal and contract-based. Thirty-seven percent of respondents said that unexpected overtime is often required; another 27% said it is sometimes required.

Responses varied when employers were asked how much flexibility is given to trades employees regarding their work hours. Most said that their workplace was 'quite a bit' or 'very' flexible. Others said that flexibility was dependent upon the job site and employer.

Fifty-three percent of those interviewed felt that work/family balance was an issue for trades and industry workers. Respondents mentioned the impacts of seasonal work, travel, long hours and camp situations. Fifty percent of respondents felt work/family balance was more of an issue for female workers, mostly because "women are the primary caregivers of children."

As employers, respondents were asked how they support employees in meeting both their work and family responsibilities. The majority said they discuss issues with employees and accommodate them when possible. Some offered flex hours and deferred leave. Most said they would help employees with time off for emergencies.

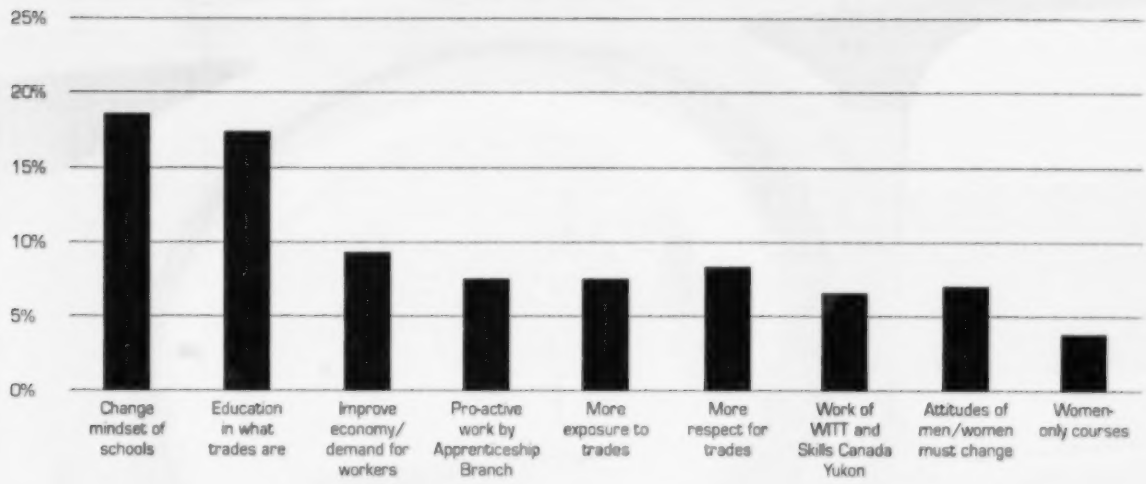
Results — Mentoring and Supports

Ninety-three percent of those interviewed said that mentoring is encouraged in their workplace. Respondents were asked how mentoring works. Most said that mentoring occurs informally or through on-the-job training. Journeymen also teach apprentices in some workplaces. One employer mentioned a coaching program.

Respondents were asked if women employees have the opportunity to see women role models in senior roles. Thirty percent said yes, and 70% said no, or that there are women in senior positions, but not in the trades area.

Respondents were asked what changes or supports could exist in the trades or industry workplace to increase the recruitment and retention of women workers. Respondents spoke generally about trades and did not restrict their comments to the workplace. Most felt that supports or promotion should apply equally to men and women, and that trades promotion needs to be increased to youth from a young age. The figure on the next page details the responses.

Ways to Increase Recruitment in Trades



Other suggestions and comments included "need role models", "pre-training", "YWET a good thing", "wage subsidies for apprentices", "child care supports" and "Public Schools and Apprenticeship make trades an active target."

"The schools don't prepare kids for the real world of work."

In summary, the Yukon employers and industry representatives who participated in this study expressed concern about a lack of respect for trades and other 'blue-collar' work. They also expressed concern about possible future shortages of skilled trades workers.

A potential solution to both of the above issues is to utilize more female workers, thereby drawing more fully on the total labour force to increase the pool of qualified and skilled workers available. Increasing the numbers of female workers may require a culture shift in the practices of employers and in societal attitudes in general. While change is slow, this shift has begun to occur.

Focus Group with Women in Trades

An evening focus group was held with women who worked in the trades. Eight women attended and the discussion was lively. The women worked in a variety of trades. Some were new to trades, but many had worked in the area for twenty years or more. Half of the women had achieved journeyman (they prefer the term) status in their chosen trade.

"Personally, I've never had a problem with an employer. I've been in the Yukon a lot of years and people know me and my work ethic. They know that I was never in a trade to prove anything – that I wasn't there to prove I was better than a man, that I was there to do a job. I've actually had a lot of support and a lot of encouragement."

The women were asked about employers' attitudes to female trades workers. The responses were generally positive. Some women did mention that they had to work a little harder than some of the men in order to 'prove themselves' in the work environment.

The women felt that stereotypes about women and women's roles do affect women's ability to enter the trades, but generally they felt that attitudes were getting better. They felt that while some men may feel uncomfortable at first, that respect could be earned by doing a good job. The point was brought up that customers can be more resistant than co-workers.

"Typical stereotyping – like with the clients if you're working as a foreman on the job and you've got a (male) apprentice, the client will go to the guy and ask the question."

"Sometimes you have to be a little bit better or do a little bit more to get them over that initial hump of 'you're just a woman' – less so now than it was ten years ago or twenty years ago."

"There's still the old guy out there somewhere who still believes you shouldn't be out there."

The women were asked if they'd worked with other women or had female role models in their trade. Almost all said that they had not worked with or had female role models. "I am the role model," one woman said.

"When I was apprenticing, I was alone. I work with men only. I never thought of that lately."

"I remember going to my schooling (at trades school), every year, I was the only woman in that whole building. There was never a line up at the bathroom..."

"I've had to deal with a lot of stuff, and sometimes, I just have to swallow it and walk away, but sometimes, especially just lately, I've been opening my mouth just a little bit... Every client we go to, they either think I'm his daughter or they go 'oh look at your little helper' – just things like that, people just close-minded and ignorant. They don't believe I should be there, and they don't expect me to talk back because I'm young and I'm a woman and I'm in the trades. I've started saying a little bit more but I've been undermined quite a bit and I don't think I've handled it as well as I should have."

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Some women had felt increased pressure to perform well in order to prove the capability of all women. "If the woman ahead of you didn't do a very good job, then, all of a sudden, everybody's got a bad taste in their mouth, and then you have to prove yourself."

"(When I started) I was out to prove something and I was really, really trying hard and it took me about two years before I realized that equality means I can make mistakes...you know, you have this mindset you have to be so much better than the boys...I was so tired. You get tired of torturing yourself and you realize, hey, I can't keep doing this and maybe I should relax and be confident that I am as good as the boys."

The women had a variety of strategies for dealing with workplace issues including dealing with stereotypes, teasing, and resistance from customers and co-workers. One woman described her initiation experiences: "I went to vocational school for automotive mechanics, I was the only woman...as soon as the instructor went out...I'd be under a truck pulling a transmission out and they'd grab my boots, you know, steel-toed boots, me and the creeper would go flying and we'd bounce off the other wall. But I learned how to get even too..."

Most felt strongly that with a thick skin and a sense of humour, dealing with resistance becomes easier and easier. However, one woman expressed frustration: "I just can't take it with a sense of humour anymore because I've just worked too hard the last few years."

The focus group participants were asked if lack of physical strength was a problem for them in their work. None of them felt that this was a problem. (This is an interesting contrast to the employers, 35% of whom mentioned physical strength as a barrier to women's employment in trades.) They mentioned that both male and female trades workers learn to use tools and leverage to make heavy lifting easier.

"Men will use brute strength... if you just take that minute to think about it, there's some other mechanical way of doing it so much easier."

Fifty percent of the employers surveyed said that work/family balance is more of an issue for female trades workers. In contrast, none of the women who participated in the focus group felt that it was a major issue. They felt that children have an impact on both men's and women's lives.

Women at the focus group were asked if the 'word of mouth' recruiting method is a barrier to women. After years of experience in the trades, most of these women felt comfortable walking onto a job site and asking about work. "If I needed a job I'd be out there like, 'Hey, this is what I can do; let me prove it to you.'"

However, while the majority of employers in the trades use word of mouth to recruit and advertise for trades workers, the women admitted that informal methods such as this might not be so easy for women with little experience trying to break into the trades. They felt that women needed to be a "little bit thick-skinned."

"I might be over-generalizing, but it seems like most women who are in the trades have certain qualities about them — strong, motivated and determined — they're competent, and you have to have that a lot of the time because you get a negative reaction from somebody about how you shouldn't be there, or they try to push your buttons to see if you can handle it."

"Now, I want to build cabins, I want to build dog houses, I want to build everything... and me and power tools, I'd never been around electricity, that was a real eye-opener when we had that one-day workshop, I loved that."

Women discussed the positive aspects of trades work, and the empowering value of working with your hands: "I think that's the most awesome part of being self-confident and in the trades. I got an ATV now and it ticks me off because something's wrong with it. I'm not taking it to the shop. I'm thinking 'OK, I'm taking a small engine repair course and I want to know what the hell's going on with it'."

Women were asked why women might not pursue trades in school or as a career. They gave suggestions as to how to increase representation of women in trades. They felt that trades were a big unknown to many women.

"I really believe in giving young girls just a chance to try their hand at these skills that have been kept secret from them."

"Men have tried to make us believe it's rocket science...for a long time."

"A lot of women have been afraid to ask about it or didn't want to get dirty."

They also felt that schools and teachers do not encourage the trades, and that parents may not be aware of the advantages of trades careers. Peer pressure also makes it difficult for young women to pursue something 'different.' The women mentioned the value of WITT workshops in schools to get the girls to handle tools and make them aware that they can do these things. They felt that educating teachers on the merits of trades (and the possibilities for young women in particular) was essential.

"I started my apprenticeship when I was 18 and I was pretty much looked down upon. People didn't understand it and you never hear from the counsellors that this is a good option. You don't have to do it forever, but it will pay your way and you can go lots of places."

"Just the other day I had a teacher asking 'Well, what are you doing that for? Going on and on and insulting me, (and then) she said 'So, what do you make?' and I said 'I make 30 dollars an hour' and she said 'You make more than I do!'"

The women brought up many of the same points as the employers as far as the value of teaching young women to keep their options open, and reinforcing that learning a trade doesn't preclude going to university or starting other careers down the line. As one woman said, "I want to take up carpentry and hopefully, dream comes true and I can go to law school."

Job shadowing, mentoring, and the opportunity to try the trades for short periods, either through a course or Skills Club for girls were all suggested by the focus group participants.

"Can't there be some co-op programs so you go and you work for a semester out in a trade and you go and you're a carpenter's helper or you're an electrician's helper or you're a painter, whatever you want to do?"

One woman suggested doing a poll of young girls in schools and finding out how many would be interested in after-school sessions and then going to the government for assistance in putting these on.

Focus group participants highlighted the value of having female instructors in trades courses as role models. "And not just see women teaching the girls, but see women teaching the boys, because part of the stereotype problem is also coming from the boys."

Several women also thought that giving incentives to employers would help.

"If there was an incentive given to employers, as an employer myself in the past, I would love to have a young girl – even if it was for a week, if there was some way to work with the government on a job shadowing thing – come and give me a hand."

Focus group participants were very positive about the value of having a local Women in Trades and Technology organization (Yukon WITT). As one woman said, "peer support organizations like this when there's no men around I think can be quite morale boosting. You know, you deal with some awkward men and (it helps) hearing from other people how best to finesse, tackle and work your way through."

In summary, the women who participated in the focus group were very clear about the positive aspects of a career in trades. They found the work fulfilling, empowering and interesting. They liked the skill and physicality of working with their hands, and the financial security offered by a well-paying career. They did not deny the challenges of working in a 'non-traditional' career, but they felt that these challenges could be overcome. The main challenge, they felt, was promoting these benefits to young women, and encouraging and supporting more women to embark on a career in trades.

"I might be over-generalizing, but it seems like most women who are in the trades have certain qualities about them — strong, motivated and determined — they're competent, and you have to have that a lot of the time because you get a negative reaction from somebody about how you shouldn't be there, or they try to push your buttons to see if you can handle it."

"Now, I want to build cabins, I want to build dog houses, I want to build everything... and me and power tools, I'd never been around electricity, that was a real eye-opener when we had that one-day workshop. I loved that."

Women discussed the positive aspects of trades work, and the empowering value of working with your hands: "I think that's the most awesome part of being self-confident and in the trades. I got an ATV now and it ticks me off because something's wrong with it. I'm not taking it to the shop. I'm thinking 'OK, I'm taking a small engine repair course and I want to know what the hell's going on with it'."

Women were asked why women might not pursue trades in school or as a career. They gave suggestions as to how to increase representation of women in trades. They felt that trades were a big unknown to many women.

"I really believe in giving young girls just a chance to try their hand at these skills that have been kept secret from them."

"Men have tried to make us believe it's rocket science...for a long time."

"A lot of women have been afraid to ask about it or didn't want to get dirty."

They also felt that schools and teachers do not encourage the trades, and that parents may not be aware of the advantages of trades careers. Peer pressure also makes it difficult for young women to pursue something 'different.' The women mentioned the value of WITT workshops in schools to get the girls to handle tools and make them aware that they can do these things. They felt that educating teachers on the merits of trades (and the possibilities for young women in particular) was essential.

"I started my apprenticeship when I was 18 and I was pretty much looked down upon. People didn't understand it and you never hear from the counsellors that this is a good option. You don't have to do it forever, but it will pay your way and you can go lots of places."

"Just the other day I had a teacher asking 'Well, what are you doing that for? Going on and on and insulting me, (and then) she said 'So, what do you make?' and I said 'I make 30 dollars an hour' and she said 'You make more than I do!'"

The women brought up many of the same points as the employers as far as the value of teaching young women to keep their options open, and reinforcing that learning a trade doesn't preclude going to university or starting other careers down the line. As one woman said, "I want to take up carpentry and hopefully, dream comes true and I can go to law school."

Job shadowing, mentoring, and the opportunity to try the trades for short periods, either through a course or Skills Club for girls were all suggested by the focus group participants.

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Recommendations

Education/Promotion

- Continue to support the work of the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology (YWITT) organization in schools and communities to promote the recruitment, training and retention of women in trades.

- Continue to support the Young Women Exploring Trades conferences.

- Assess and create a strategy to increase the participation of young women in senior high-school trades classes.

- Increase female role models in trades in Yukon schools at both the elementary and high school level. Effort should continue to be made to recruit a female industrial arts instructor, or create other paid opportunities for tradeswomen to participate in the classroom setting.

- Promotional campaigns to increase interest in trades careers should be specifically designed to reach women and girls. Research has shown that a passive approach to increasing women's participation in trades are is not an effective promotional strategy.

"Make sure that women get the training that they need to be as good as the guys are or whatever it takes – make that little bit of effort – because it's not easy for a woman to come from where they come from in our childhood and to achieve what the guys can achieve so much easier because they've had the chance... they've had the shop courses..."

Actively recruiting women is the best way to break down pervasive barriers that prevent women from participating.

- In an effort to reach women at later stages of career choice, or those in more traditional and low-paying sectors of the workforce, conduct a survey to assess these women's interest in pursuing apprenticeship and/or trades careers and determine how best to undertake 'bridging programs' to move them into these fields.

- Continue to support Skills Canada Yukon, and other partners from outside government, in their work to promote trades to women.

- Provide showcase opportunities for tradeswomen, such as a 'women's trade show' or demonstration project.

- Continue to evaluate the representation of Yukon women in apprenticeship and trades on an ongoing basis, in order to evaluate the success of promotional measures in the longterm. Recognize and work towards the concept of a 'critical mass' of women within large projects and industries. Critical mass refers to studies that have shown that women are more comfortable in work environments where they represent at least 30% of the population. Workplaces that are inclusive (and attract and retain women workers) are characterized by having a reasonable percentage of women.

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Training

- Establish and implement a pre-employment trades program for women.
- Women-only introductory trades courses with an employment focus should be offered in Yukon communities. "Work-oriented" training, other than office administration, and trades training for women was specifically requested by several communities in the Yukon Status of Women's 2004 Strong Women's Voices Rural Choices report.
- Conduct an assessment of the Yukon Government Apprenticeship Program and the Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Program as they pertain to the involvement of women and young women and make recommendations to increase women's participation.
- Consider developing a formalized mentoring program, with a roster of women in various trades.

Workplace

- Encourage new projects and developments in the Yukon's construction and resource industries to develop human resource plans indicating steps to increase participation of women and other equity groups.

- Assess the barriers and opportunities for aboriginal women in trades and consider specific training and employment opportunities to meet their needs. This work should be undertaken in collaboration with pertinent NGOs such as the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

- The Apprenticeship Unit of the Department of Education should consider keeping lists of employers willing to take on a female apprentice, in order to facilitate the placement of women apprentices with employers.

- Create and provide training to employers and workers in industry about how to best recruit, integrate and retain women workers.

"It seems a lot of women seem to be going alone, you know, they don't often work with other women and perhaps some employers or supervisors could be sensitized to making it a bit easier for women so they don't have to go it alone quite so much...that they could sensitize their supervising for trade people so that they don't have to deal with quite so much."

- Work within the Yukon Government to increase the representation of women in trades jobs in Yukon Government departments.

- Consider setting up an industry committee(s) to discuss strategies around recruitment and retention of women in trades. Assess the participation of women in existing advisory boards such as the Yukon Apprenticeship Advisory Committee and the Trades Advisory Committees and consider working with these boards on increasing recruitment and retention of women in the trades workplace.

The changed focus of these new recommendations reflects the progress achieved on initial recommendations in the 1999 report, as well as new areas of focus for achieving greater recruitment and retention of women in the trades workplace. The success of initiatives that have occurred since 1999, including Young Women Exploring Trades conferences, women-only introductory trades courses, and an active local Yukon Women in Technology and Trades organization, show that there is interest among Yukon women in exploring trades. Ongoing challenges include providing mentors to young women and women who may want to explore trades careers at later stages of life. Working towards a 'critical mass' of women in Yukon industries will help to change the workplace culture towards an environment where workers of both genders are valued and comfortable, and where Yukon employers can draw on a larger pool of skilled workers.

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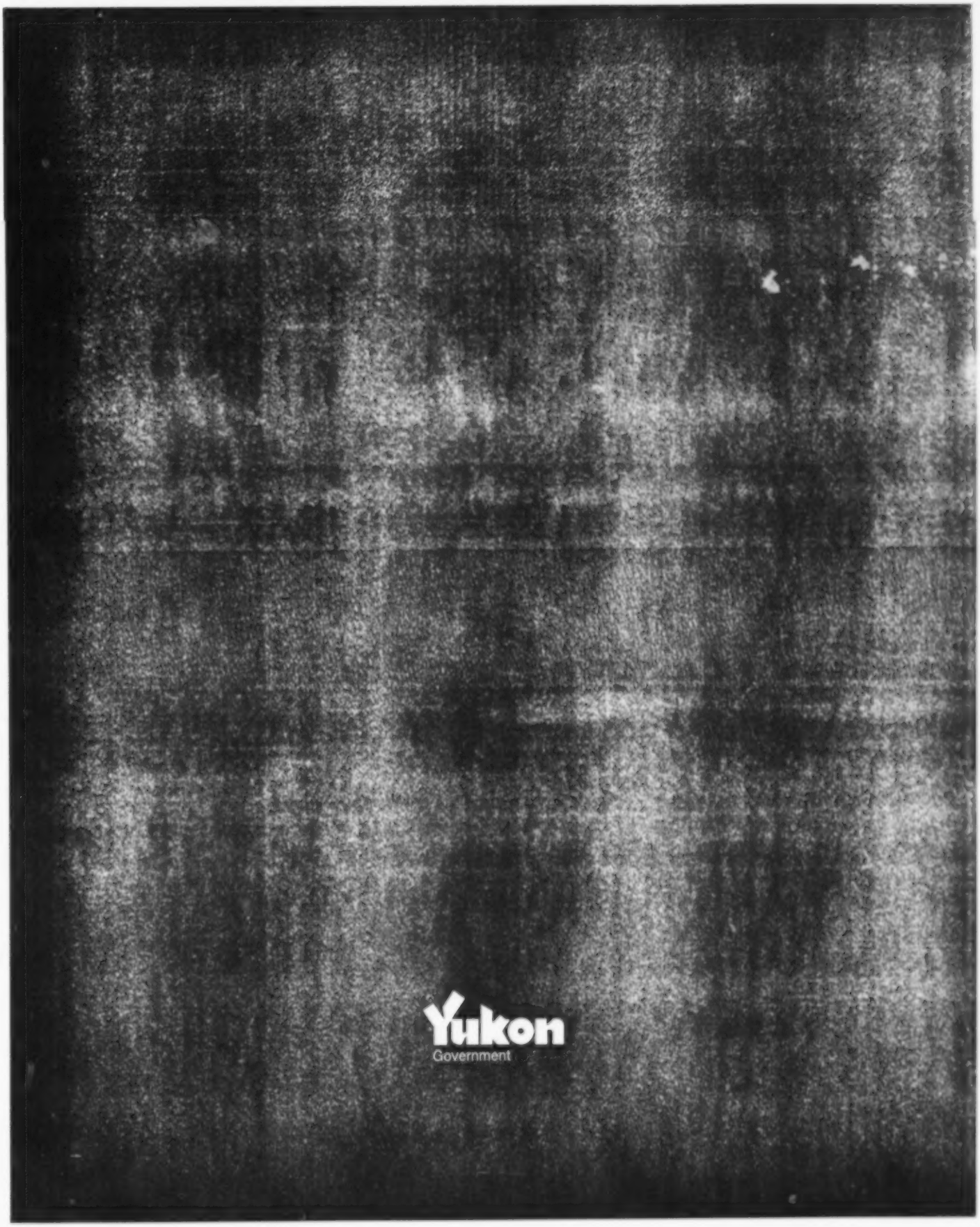
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